



CENTER FOR
FOOD SAFETY

April 5, 2017

National Freedom of Information Officer
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW (2822T)
Washington, DC 20460
SUBMITTED VIA ONLINE FORM

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request – Various matters focused on CropLife America

To the National Freedom of Information Officer:

The Center for Food Safety (CFS) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that addresses the impacts of our current industrial food production system on human health, animal welfare, and the environment. Consistent with this mission and pursuant to 40 C.F.R. Part 2 and the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552. On behalf of CFS, I request the following information, believed to be primarily, but not exclusively, within the **Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP)**:

Any and all documents or communications relating to these matters:

1. All communications and meetings since January 1, 2016, between any Headquarters EPA official including, **but not limited to**, Administrator Scott Pruitt, and any representative of the trade association, **CropLife America**, on any pesticide-related matter.
2. Any action plan, proposed policy or similar internal EPA document for addressing **synergistic effects** on the environment or on human health (“synergy”) resulting from combinations of pesticide ingredients or the combination of pesticides with other risk factors.
3. Any presentations, proposals, policy papers or other documents originating from CropLife America on the topic of synergy.
4. Any presentations, proposals, policy papers or other documents related to reform or alteration of the EPA process of complying with the Endangered Species Act for pesticide registrations or registration review originating from CropLife America.
5. Any suggestions for hiring OPP agency officers or staff, including, but not necessarily limited to, candidates’ names, originating from CropLife America.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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6. Any EPA proposal to link the re-registration of any plant-incorporated protectant (PIP) to a prohibition of soil-applied insecticides for corn and any related document, communications, presentations, proposals, policy papers or other materials originating from CropLife America.

“All documents or communications” includes but is not limited to all correspondence, minutes, memoranda, white papers, policies, communications, e-mails, reports, maps, plans, drawings, databases, phone notes and/or any other documents whatsoever created by, received from, or given to the agency, companies, or other regulators. This request includes all documents that have ever been within your custody or control, whether they exist in agency “working,” investigative, retired, electronic mail, or other files currently or at any other time.

CFS requests this information in light of the President’s “Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies” dated January 21, 2009, which states:

The Freedom of Information Act should be administered with a clear presumption: In the face of doubt, openness prevails...In responding to requests under the FOIA, executive branch agencies (agencies) should act promptly and in a spirit of cooperation, recognizing that such agencies are servants of the public. All agencies should adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure, in order to renew their commitment to the principles embodied in FOIA, and to usher in a new era of open Government. The presumption of disclosure should be applied to all decisions involving FOIA. The presumption of disclosure also means that agencies should take affirmative steps to make information public.

Exec. Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, 74 Fed. Reg. 4,683 (Jan. 21, 2009). This request is being sent to the EPA FOIA officer with the understanding that it will be forwarded to other officers, offices, or departments with information pertinent to this request.

REQUEST FOR FEE-WAIVER

CFS requests that pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii), EPA waive all fees in connection with the procurement of this information. As demonstrated below, the nature of this request meets the test for fee waiver as expressed in the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

The factors EPA must consider in deciding upon a fee waiver request are laid out in 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2), and those relating to a significant contribution to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government can be summarized as follows:

(i) Whether the subject matter of the request concerns the operations or activities of the government.

(ii) Whether the disclosure of the information will likely contribute to an understanding of the subject by the general public.

(iii) Whether disclosure will contribute to a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject.

(iv) Whether the contribution to public understanding is significant.

40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l). These factors are to be balanced against one another; no one factor is determinative. *See Friends of the Coast Fork v. U.S. Dep't of Interior*, 110 F.3d 53, 55 (9th Cir. 1997).

The other requirements in the regulations—related to whether the requester has a commercial interest that outweighs a public interest motivation—are not applicable to CFS and this request. Under FOIA, a commercial interest is one that furthers a commercial, trade, or profit interest as those terms are commonly understood. *See, e.g.,* OMB Fee Guidelines, 52 Fed. Reg. 10017-18; *see also* 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(b)(1). Such interests are not present in this request. CFS does not seek information from EPA for commercial gain or interest. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, CFS has no commercial interest in EPA's regulation or exemption of treated articles and in particular crop seeds coated with neonicotinoids.

In deciding whether the fee waiver criteria is satisfied, CFS respectfully reminds EPA that FOIA is inclined toward disclosure and that the fee waiver amendments were enacted to allow further disclosure to nonprofit, public interest organizations. *See* 132 Cong. Rec. S. 14270-01, (statement of Sen. Leahy) (“[A]gencies should not be allowed to use fees as an offensive weapon against requesters seeking access to Government information.”). Furthermore, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has interpreted this fee waiver section broadly, holding that the section “is to be liberally construed in favor of waivers for noncommercial requesters.” *McClellan Ecological Seepage Situation v. Carlucci*, 835 F.2d 1282, 1284 (9th Cir. 1987) (citing Sen. Leahy).

I. The Present Disclosure is in the Public Interest Because it Will Significantly Contribute to Public Understanding of the Operations or Activities of Government.

The requested disclosure will contribute to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

A. The subject of the disclosure concerns “the operations and activities of the government.”

The requested information pertains to EPA's regulation of pesticides under FIFRA as well as other related science and research. Because EPA is responsible for regulating insecticides, this request regarding information about the Agency's proposals, policies and internal information relates to operations and activities of the government. This disclosure will

demonstrate to the public at large how EPA regulates pesticides, what policies it has adopted or and how it communicates these policies with the public and regulated community, which directly relates to the operations and activities of the government.

B. The disclosure is likely to contribute public understanding.

As discussed in the previous section, the present disclosure will provide the public a better understanding of how the EPA analyzes the use and potential harm of pesticides in fulfillment of its regulatory duties, including communications it has with interested parties during that process. More specifically, the present disclosure will provide the public with an understanding of how EPA analyzes the character and potential adverse of pesticides and how EPA with the regulated entities who manufacture the pesticides. It is essential for members of the public, including consumers, farmers, beekeepers, and other public interest organizations, to better understand how EPA conducts these activities. The requested records will meaningfully inform the public about these government operations or activities in a way not currently available in the public domain. *See* 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2)(ii).

CFS is a non-profit organization that informs, educates, and counsel the public—via legal action, our website, our True Food Network, books and reports, and our monthly e-newsletter, *Food Safety Now!*—on the harm done to human health, animal welfare, and the environment by industrial agriculture. For example, CFS has authored several reports and fact sheets regarding pesticides.¹ CFS also submitted comments on numerous EPA pesticide dockets. Accordingly, CFS is an effective vehicle to disseminate information on pesticides and herbicides.

Simultaneously, this FOIA will help CFS fulfill its well established function of public oversight of government action. Public oversight of agency action in particular is a vital component in our democratic system and is the bedrock upon which FOIA stands.

C. The disclosure will contribute to the understanding of a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject.

This disclosure will contribute to the understanding of a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in EPA's exemption of "treated articles" and neonicotinoid-coated seeds from FIFRA's registration requirements. 40 C.F.R § 2.107(l)(2)(iii). CFS is a member-oriented non-profit organization with over 750,000 members that works to address the impacts of the food system on human health, animal welfare, and the environment. Through over a decade of involvement in environmental litigation and policymaking as it relates to food and pesticides,

¹ Center for Food Safety, *Neonicotinoid Study Index*, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/304/pollinators-and-pesticides/fact-sheets/3683/neonicotinoid-study-index>; Center for Food Safety, *Pollinators & Pesticides* Fact Sheet Aug. 2016, http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/pollinatorspesticides-2016_fact-sheet_82548.pdf; Center for Food Safety, *Water Hazard: Aquatic Contamination by Neonicotinoid Insecticides in the United States* (Sept. 16, 2015), <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/304/pollinators-and-pesticides/reports/4048/water-hazard-aquatic-contamination-by-neonicotinoid-insecticides-in-the-united-states>; Center for Food Safety, *Hidden Costs of Toxic Seed Coatings*, Fact Sheet June 2015, http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/files/neonic-factsheet_75083.pdf; Center for Food Safety, *Heavy Costs: Weighing the Value of Neonicotinoid Insecticides in Agriculture* (March 24th, 2014), <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/304/pollinators-and-pesticides/reports/2999/heavy-costs-weighing-the-value-of-neonicotinoid-insecticides-in-agriculture>.

CFS has demonstrated its ability to take technical information provided by government agencies and distill it into a format that is accessible to the public. CFS employs science and policy experts² who have analyzed FOIA; National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA); and other environmental and scientific reports for their entire careers. CFS puts out reports on pesticides, genetically engineered foods, food and feed additives, and other topics that tend to be difficult for the layperson to understand without professional assistance.³ As noted above, CFS has published many fact sheets and reports for its members and the public on the topic of pesticides.⁴ CFS also facilitates members' ability to confront agency inaction.⁵ Finally, CFS regularly conveys information in accessible formats to its membership base through "action Alerts" via email.

Federal courts have found that dissemination to 2,500 people through a newsletter and the intent to start a website is sufficient to meet the "reasonably broad audience" factor. *Forest Guardians v. U.S. Dep't of Interior*, 416 F.3d 1173, 1180 (10th Cir. 2005). Moreover, they have found that the proven ability to digest and disseminate highly technical information, as demonstrated by past analysis and dissemination, merits giving nonprofit organizations fee waivers. *See W. Watersheds Project v. Brown*, 318 F.Supp.2d 1036, 1040 (D. Idaho 2004). CFS's activity in these respects far outstrips any minimums established by judicial interpretation.

D. The disclosure is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations or activities.

The disclosure is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the subject in question, as compared to the level of public understanding existing prior to the disclosure. 40 C.F.R. § 2.107(l)(2)(iv).

CFS employs science and policy experts⁶ who have analyzed FOIA, NEPA, and other environmental and scientific reports for their entire careers. CFS puts out reports on pesticides, genetically engineered foods, food and feed additives, and other topics that tend to be difficult for the layperson to understand without professional assistance.⁷ To that end, disclosure will result in an enhanced understanding of the subject matter for the public because the disclosure will facilitate an understanding EPA's regulation of pesticides and how EPA communicates this to regulated entities. This information is not currently publically available, and CFS has a proven ability to synthesize and analyze technical information from a scientific, legal, and policy standpoints, and to disseminate that information to the public.

II. Obtaining the Information is of No Commercial Interest to CFS.

² See Leadership, Center for Food Safety, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/staff> (last visited Sep. 26, 2016).

³ See Publications and Resources, Center for Food Safety, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/reports> (last visited Sep. 26, 2016).

⁴ *Supra* note 1.

⁵ See Press Release, Center for Food Safety, 250,000+ to EPA: Time for Emergency Action on Pesticide to Protect Bees (June 28, 2012), <http://centerforfoodsafety.com/press-releases/713/250000-to-epa-time-for-emergency-action-on-pesticide-to-protect-bees>.

⁶ See Leadership, Center for Food Safety, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/staff> (last visited June 24, 2014).

⁷ See Publications & Resources, Center for Food Safety, <http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/reports> (last visited June 24, 2014).

The Center for Food Safety is a 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental advocacy organization that works to address the impacts of our food production system on human health, animal welfare and the environment. CFS works to achieve its goals through grassroots campaigns, public education, media outreach, and litigation. Under FOIA, a commercial interest is one that furthers a commercial, trade, or profit interest as those terms are commonly understood. *See e.g.*, OMB Fee Guidelines, 52 Fed. Reg. 10017-18. Such interests are not present in this request. In no manner does CFS seek information from the EPA for commercial gain or interest. CFS respectfully files this FOIA request pursuant to its goal of educating the general public on the adverse effects of industrial agriculture. Upon request and free of charge, CFS will provide members of the public with relevant information obtained from EPA

Based upon the foregoing, CFS requests that this FOIA be classified within the EPA's fee waiver category and that EPA send the requested information as required by law. As this is a matter of extreme importance to CFS, we look forward to your reply within twenty working days as required by FOIA. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A)(i). If the responsive records are voluminous please contact me to discuss the proper scope of the response. If any exemption from FOIA's disclosure requirement is claimed, please describe in writing the general nature of the document and the particular legal basis upon which the exemption is claimed. Should any document be redacted, please indicate the location of the redaction through the use of black ink.

Please provide any and all non-exempt portions of any document which may be partially exempt due to some privilege as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973).

Please send all materials to the Washington, D.C. address on the letterhead. Please call me at (202) 547-9359 or email PJenkins@centerforfoodsafety.org if you have any further questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

/s/

Peter T. Jenkins, Of Counsel
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